



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

April 25, 2005

His Excellency Vladimir Putin
President
The Russian Federation
C/o Embassy of the Russian Federation
2650 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear President Putin:

The following quotation was attributed to you in a recent report from the Associated Press: "First and foremost it is worth acknowledging that the demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."

As much as we treasure our free press in the United States, we understand that reporters, just like the rest of us, sometimes make mistakes. It is my fervent hope that you have been misquoted.

Because Russia was the largest of the captive nations, its victory in the Cold War that ended Soviet Communism was the most significant of any people on earth. The economic collapse of the 1990s was both tragic and unnecessary. But the introduction of markets in place of the Soviet centralized planning system is beginning to yield benefits for ordinary Russians, and this would not have been possible without the demise of the Soviet Union. Likewise, the fledgling democracy which Russia's friends in the West hope will genuinely take hold, along with a truly free press, were not even dreams when the Communist Politburo ruled.

Not least of all, the end of the Soviet Union also marked the end of the horrible nuclear standoff that threatened the planet. Today, Russia, the United States, and all of the world's industrialized democracies are working together.

In more than seventy years, Soviet Communism never permitted a single free election. Historian Nicolas Werth attributes to Communism the deaths of

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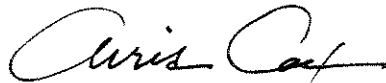
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more than 20 million people in the Soviet Union during the 20th century. Anne Applebaum has documented that concentration camps and mass executions were a feature of the Soviet state from its very beginnings, and led, just during Stalin's reign, to more than 18 million people being sent to concentration camps, where they were exposed to bitter cold, tortured, raped, and starved.

The great catastrophe of the last century in Russia was the Soviet Union itself. Looking back on the suffering endured by the Russian people at the hands of the Soviet regime, it is hard for me to believe that something significant has not been lost in translation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Cox", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christopher Cox
U.S. Representative

CCC:jbf